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ABSTRACT

The perceptions of 163 Bowie State College students concerning differences in people based on race, gender, and physical disability were studied during fall 1987. While the majority of respondents perceived discrimination in the United States and in Prince George's County, Maryland, a minority believed that there was discrimination on the Bowie campus. Respondents viewed slightly over one-third of the faculty as competent. The majority agreed that race, religion, or handicap do not make one characteristically smarter or ignorant. The majority of respondents also agreed that race, religion, or handicap do not make one characteristically more athletic; however, 27.6% said the handicapped are less athletic. The majority also indicated that they do not avoid people based on gender, handicap, religion, race, or age. Some prefer multi-racial and multi-religious environments and some even prefer to interact with the handicapped. The survey questions and responses for each question are appended. (SW)

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Preliminary Study of Perceived Discrimination and Prejudices of College Students

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I. Introduction

Studies on perceptions of discrimination and prejudices of college students are important if we, as a nation, are to address the multitude of problems created by real and perceived cases of discrimination based on prejudices. College students are tomorrow's leaders in every facet of American life. They will become the leaders in the institutions of government, education and religion. Their prejudices will influence generations to come by the policies they will create. To cloud those judgments affecting policy by the blinders of prejudices is to severely alter the foundation of American society. The pluralism we pride ourselves in is severely limited when we effect policies that have the potential of limiting or curtailing the development of any group.

The effects of these blinders are becoming more evident. Some colleges and universities have moved to curtail the enrollment of Asian American students through a quota system in certain institutions. Some colleges and universities are eliminating special admissions criteria for traditionally underrepresented groups, thereby curtailing the presence of these groups on the campus. Some colleges and universities have reinstituted testing programs that adversely affect traditionally underrepresented groups. As the struggle to provide equity and access of opportunity continues, we need to constantly be aware of the question of the relationship between policies and prejudices. Since college students will one day be the formers of policy, it is important to study their prejudices.

This preliminary study reports the findings of a survey conducted at Bowie State College during February and March 1987. The respondents were undergraduate students at Bowie State College. These students will be among tomorrow's leadership. Their perceptions of other groups will influence the policies they will formulate in the future.

II. Literature Search

There have been a number of studies of perceived and real prejudices and the effectd of prejudices on college campuses conducted during the past decade. These studies have been primarily in the areas of race and sex differences in social activities and behaviors and wages.

Janet Collins and K.N. Nickel (1976) speak to the paradoxical nature of prejudice. The stereotypes, folktales and miseducation in school and society result in the psychological damage of white and black children. The perpetuation of the erroneous notion that whites are superior and blacks are inferior causes twisted personalities in whites and blacks with the resultant inhibitation and distraction of democratic ideals and practices. The researchers contend that ethnic prejudice, particularly against blacks, is most pervasive and is not perceived by whites.

Alyce C. Martinez and William E. Sedlacek surveyed University of Maryland, College Park students on their perceptions of social values on the campus. They found little change in racial attitudes over the decade from 1970-1981. The authors cited research on racial attitudes and behavior. Although students perceive racial prejudice as less socially acceptable they nevertheless held these negative attitudes. The authors contend that attitudes and behavior are related to situational context.

Lydia Y. Minatoya and William E. Sedlacek (1980) studied black and white University students to profile the effect of background on attitudes. They found significant differences between black and white students on indicators of experiences and attitudes related to interracial contact. Their findings indicate that generally speaking, black students had more exposure to other races than white students and were more open toward racial interaction. In a related study on dating, Maxine L. Clark (1986) found that most students on southern white college campuses dated within their own race. However, more black men than black women preferred to date interracially.

Elois Skeen Scott and Sandra Bowman Damico (1983) studied interracial contact in high school as a predictor of interracial contact in college. They concluded that school sponsored interracial activities promote cross-race contact both in high school and in college. They recommended that school policies which result in a racial division of the extracurricular program need to be avoided. The example given is when one race takes over an activity like student government while another race controls the chorus.

Theses studies suggest changes in some attitudes and behaviors but little change in racial attitudes during the past ten to fifteen (10-15) years.

The following study was conducted to examine the perceptions of Bowie State College students of differences in people based on race, gender and physical disability.

METHODOLOGY

SETTING AND POPULATION

The survey was administered to students at Bowie State College by the Special Services Project staff and the Psychology-Sociology faculty during the fall of 1987. A total of one hundred sixty-three (163) people were surveyed. There was a total of eighty-nine (89) or 54.6% females and fifty-three (53) or 32.5% males. Twenty-one (21) or 12.9% of the population did not indicate their sex. Racially, one hundred twenty-one (121) or 74.2% were black, nine (9) or 5.5% were white, one (1) or .6% was Hispanic, one (1) or .6% was American Indian, and thirty-one (31) or 19% of the population did not indicate their race. The respondents were between the ages of 17 and 46 with the modal age being 18. Twenty-three (23) people did not indicate their ages. One hundred six (106) or 65% of the population indicated that they were non-handicapped, two (2) or 1.2% were handicapped, one (1) or .6% was learning disabled and fifty-four (54) or 33.1% of the population did not indicate their status. Of the respondents, one hundred sixty (160) or 98.2% were natives of the United States, two (2) or 1.2% were natives of Nigeria, and one(1) or .6% was a native of Peru.

FINDINGS

Table 1 indicates the responses (in percentages) to the survey instrument per question. Eighty-six percent (86%) of the respondents felt that there is discrimination in the United sTates while 72.4% believe that there is discrimination in Prince George's County. When it came to Bowie State College, however, only 37.4% believe that there is discrimination on the campus. Of the students surveyed, 42.3% said some of the teachers here are competent. Students were somewhat split on perception of the ages of their teachers. 60.1% said some of the teachers are young while 73.6%

said some of the teachers are old, and 68.1% of the students said some of the teachers are middle aged. With respect to gender, 39.3% of the students don't know if most teachers here are female, and the same percentage, 39.2% don't know if most of the teachers here are male. With respect to race, 42.3% of the students said most teachers here are non-white, while 47.9% of the students said most teachers here are black.

When it came to the issue of intelligence, 50.3% of the students said men are not smarter than women, while 46.6% of the students said women are not smarter than men. 45.4% of the students said some racial groups are not characteristically smarter, and the same percentage, 45.4% of the students said some racial groups are not characteristically ignorant. 47.9% of the students said some religious groups are not characteristically smart, while 48.5% of the students said religious groups are not characteristically ignorant. With respect to disability, 51.5% of the students said handicapped people are not characteristically smarter and 57.7% of the students said handicapped people are not characteristically ignorant.

With respect to athletics, 46.0% of the students said it is false that women are more athletic than men but 45.4% of the students said some women are more athletic than men. 46.6% of the students said men are more athletic than women, and 31.3% of the students said men are more athletic than women. 28.2% of the students said it is false that some racial groups are characteristically more athletic, while 27.6% of the students said some racial groups are characteristically more athletic. On the same question, 24.5% of the students said some of the some racial groups are characteristically more athletic. 28.8% of the students said it is false that some racial groups are characteristically less athletic, and 22.7% of the students said some of the racial groups are characteristically less athletic. 22.1% of the students said that they don't know

if racial groups are less athletic. 55.8% of the students said handicapped people are not characteristically more athletic.

27.6% of the students said handicapped people are characteristically less athletic, 26.4% of the students said handicapped people are not characteristically less athletic. 55.8% of the students said it is false that handicapped people are characteristically more athletic.

On the issue of odors, 49.7% of the students said some smells, or odors are peculiar to women, while 46.0% of the students said some smells or odors are peculiar to men. With respect to race, 30.1% of the students said some smells or odors are not peculiar to some racial groups, while 25.2% of the students said some smells or odors are peculiar to some racial groups. A large percentage, 27.6% of the students said they don't know. With respect to religion, 31.9% of the students said some smells or odors are not peculiar to some religious groups, but 21.5% of the students said some smells or odors are peculiar to some religious groups. The largest percentage, 33.1% of the students said they don't know.

On the issue of cleanliness, 45.4% of the students said some women are cleaner than men but 32.5% of the students said women are not cleaner than men. While 50.9% of the students said some men are cleaner than women, 33.7% of the students said men are not cleaner than women. While 43.6% of the students said cleanliness is not related to gender, 30.1% of the students said cleanliness is related to gender. With respect to race, 43.6% of the students said some blacks are cleaner than whites. While 42.9% of the students said whites are cleaner than blacks. A large percentage, 61.3% of the students said cleanliness is not related to race. With respect to the handicapped, 46.0% of the students said it is false that handicapped people are cleaner than non-handicapped people. 41.7% of the students said it is

false that non-handicapped people are cleaner than handicapped people, 60.7% of the students said cleanliness is not related to handicap.

On the question of avoidance of different groups, 69.3% of the students said they do not avoid females, 62.6% of the students said they do not avoid males, 75.5% of the students said they do not avoid handicapped people and 81.0% of the students said they do not avoid people who are religiously different from them. 84.7% of the students said they do not avoid people who are racially different from them. 82.2% of the students said they do not avoid people younger than the age of 17, and students said they do not avoid people over the age of 30.

On the question of environmental preference along racial lines, 62.0% of the students said they prefer a multi-racial environment. On the question of a multi-religious environment, 46.0% of the students said they prefer a multi-religious environment. On preference for interacting with the handicapped, 41.75 of the students said they prefer to interact with the handicapped some, while 30.1% of the students actually prefer to interact with the handicapped.

SUMMARY

Eighty-one percent (81%) of the respondents indicated that there is discrimination in the United states. The respondents exhibit uncertainty of the majority of the faculty's races and ages. The majority agreed that race, religion or handicap do not make one characteristically smarter or ignorant. The majority of respondents also agreed that race, religion or handicap do not make one charateristically more athletic; however, 27.6% of the respondents said the handicapped are less athletic. The respondents said some odors are peculiar to men and women but not to racial groups or the handicapped. The respondents agreed that cleanliness is not related to gender, race or handicap. The majority of respondents also indicated that they do not avoid people based on gender, handicap, religion, race or age. Some prefer multi-racial and multi-religious environments and some even prefer to interact with the handicapped.

On the fifty (50) survey questions, the respondents answered 54% false, 22% somewhat true, 18% true and 6% don't know. These results show that the respondents on this college campus are aware of discrimination. Regrettably, these results also indicate that although many respondents displayed views that were more in line with accuracy, inaccurate views of other groups still exist on campuses and those who have these views behave accordingly, to which many victims of such behavior can attest.

The researchers would like to see this type of survey administered on other campuses so that the findings can be compared to the results obtained at Bowie State College. It would be interesting to see how populations on other campuses react to questions on discrimination, teacher characteristics, intelligence, athletics, odors, cleanliness, avoidance and preferences.

CONCLUSIONS

Generally speaking, most Bowie State College students surveyed perceive discrimination in the United States and in Prince George's County. There is a perception that the campus does not reflect the discrimination in the county or in the country. In this respect, the campus is viewed far more positively than other environments students interact in.

On the perceptions of the teaching faculty, slightly over one-third of the faculty are viewed as competent while most students view "some" faculty as competent. This finding needs to be addressed so that faculty may be perceived as more knowledgeable by the undergraduate students they teach.

On the issue of intelligence, among all the possibilities cited (men vs. women, racial groups, religious groups, handicapped), the handicapped were viewed most favorably. This finding was surprising but may speak to the widespread interactions of students with one very popular blind undergraduate male student who has hosted several student shows and been extremely active on the campus. This person and other handicapped students appear to have broken down many of the stereotypes on the campus.

On the question of athletics, there are definite perceptions of differences in athletic abilities, based on race. There are also indications that slightly less than one-third of the students surveyed still perceive men as being more athletic than women.

The largest agreement on odor differences was based on gender. This was not surprising. What was surprising was reported odor differences

among religious groups. Although slightly over one-fifth of those surveyed reported these differences, the result was surprising.

On cleanliness, there were definite indications of differences in perceptions based on race. Although 61.3% of students surveyed indicated that cleanliness is not related to race, 28.7% reported different responses. This finding was surprising.

On group avoidance, the vast majority of student do not avoid others based on gender, religion, race or age. This finding speaks to an "openness" among students to others who are different. This finding is consistent with student preferences for a multi-racial, multi-religious and handicapped integrated environment.

TABLE 1

QUESTIONS	RESPONSES	
1) There is no discrimination in the United States.	TRUE	4.3%
	FALSE	81.0%
	SOMEWHAT TRUE	13.5%
	DON'T KNOW	1.2%
	NO RESPONSE	0%
2) There is no discrimination in Prince George's County.	TRUE	1.8%
	FALSE	72.4%
	SOMEWHAT TRUE	12.9%
	DON'T KNOW	12.3%
	NO RESPONSE	.6%
3) There is no discrimination at Bowie State College.	TRUE	12.3%
	FALSE	37.4%
	SOMEWHAT TRUE	23.9%
	DON'T KNOW	24.5%
	NO RESPONSE	1.8%
4) The teachers at Bowie are competent.	TRUE	36.2%
	FALSE	2.5%
	SOMEWHAT TRUE	42.3%
	DON'T KNOW	16.0%
	NO RESPONSE	3.1%
5) The teachers at Bowie are young.	TRUE	1.2%
	FALSE	29.4%
	SOMEWHAT TRUE	60.1%
	DON'T KNOW	8.6%
	NO RESPONSE	.6%

6)	The teachers at Bowie are middle aged.	TRUE	23.3%
		FALSE	3.1%
		SOMEWHAT TRUE	68.1%
		DON'T KNOW	4.9%
		NO RESPONSE	.6%
7)	The teachers at Bowie are old.	TRUE	4.9%
		FALSE	13.5%
		SOMEWHAT TRUE	73.6%
		DON'T KNOW	8.0%
		NO RESPONSE	0%
8)	Most teachers here are female.	TRUE	16.6%
		FALSE	15.3%
		SOMEWHAT TRUE	28.8%
		DON'T KNOW	39.3%
		NO RESPONSE	0%
9)	Most teachers here are male.	TRUE	12.3%
		FALSE	19.6%
		SOMEWHAT TRUE	28.2%
		DON'T KNOW	39.3%
		NO RESPONSE	.6%
10)	Most teachers here are white.	TRUE	6.1%
		FALSE	42.3%
		SOMEWHAT TRUE	30.1%
		DON'T KNOW	20.9%
		NO RESPONSE	.6%
11)	Most teachers here are black.	TRUE	47.9%
		FALSE	9.2%
		SOMEWHAT TRUE	20.2%
		DON'T KNOW	21.5%
		NO RESPONSE	1.2%

12)	Most teachers here have some language other than English as a first language.	TRUE	26.4%
		FALSE	7.4%
		SOMEWHAT TRUE	35.0%
		DON'T KNOW	31.3%
		NO RESPONSE	0%
13)	Men are smarter than women.	TRUE	4.3%
		FALSE	50.3%
		SOMEWHAT TRUE	31.9%
		DON'T KNOW	12.9%
		NO RESPONSE	.6%
14)	Women are smarter than men.	TRUE	6.7%
		FALSE	46.6%
		SOMEWHAT TRUE	31.3%
		DON'T KNOW	12.9%
		NO RESPONSE	2.5%
15)	Some racial groups are characteristically smarter.	TRUE	16.0%
		FALSE	45.4%
		SOMEWHAT TRUE	19.0%
		DON'T KNOW	19.0%
		NO RESPONSE	.6%
16)	Some racial groups are characteristically ignorant.	TRUE	16.0%
		FALSE	45.4%
		SOMEWHAT TRUE	20.9%
		DON'T KNOW	17.2%
		NO RESPONSE	.6%
17)	Some religious groups are characteristically smarter.	TRUE	9.8%
		FALSE	47.9%
		SOMEWHAT TRUE	15.3%
		DON'T KNOW	26.4%
		NO RESPONSE	.6%

18)	Some religious groups are characteristically ignorant.	TRUE	10.4%
		FALSE	48.5%
		SOMEWHAT TRUE	15.3%
		DON'T KNOW	23.9%
		NO RESPONSE	1.8%
19)	Handicapped people are characteristically smarter.	TRUE	2.5%
		FALSE	51.5%
		SOMEWHAT TRUE	22.7%
		DON'T KNOW	22.7%
		NO RESPONSE	.6%
20)	Handicapped people are characteristically ignorant.	TRUE	1.8%
		FALSE	57.7%
		SOMEWHAT TRUE	15.3%
		DON'T KNOW	25.2%
		NO RESPONSE	0%
21)	Women are more athletic than men.	TRUE	2.5%
		FALSE	46.0%
		SOMEWHAT TRUE	45.4%
		DON'T KNOW	4.9%
		NO RESPONSE	1.2%
22)	Men are more athletic than women.	TRUE	31.1%
		FALSE	17.2%
		SOMEWHAT TRUE	46.6%
		DON'T KNOW	4.9%
		NO RESPONSE	0%
23)	Some racial groups are characteristically more athletic.	TRUE	27.6%
		FALSE	28.2%
		SOMEWHAT TRUE	24.5%
		DON'T KNOW	18.4%
		NO RESPONSE	1.2%

24) Some racial groups are characteristically less athletic.	TRUE	25.8%
	FALSE	28.8%
	SOMEWHAT TRUE	22.7%
	DON'T KNOW	22.1%
	NO RESPONSE	.6%
25) Handicapped people are characteristically more athletic.	TRUE	.6%
	FALSE	55.8%
	SOMEWHAT TRUE	17.8%
	DON'T KNOW	25.2%
	NO RESPONSE	.6%
26) Handicapped people are characteristically less athletic.	TRUE	27.6%
	FALSE	26.4%
	SOMEWHAT TRUE	20.2%
	DON'T KNOW	23.9%
	NO RESPONSE	1.8%
27) Some smells or odors are peculiar to women.	TRUE	49.7%
	FALSE	9.2%
	SOMEWHAT TRUE	24.5%
	DON'T KNOW	14.7%
	NO RESPONSE	1.8%
28) Some smells or odors are peculiar to men.	TRUE	46.0%
	FALSE	11.0%
	SOMEWHAT TRUE	27.0%
	DON'T KNOW	12.9%
	NO RESPONSE	1.8%
29) Some smells or odors are peculiar to some racial groups.	TRUE	25.2%
	FALSE	30.1%
	SOMEWHAT TRUE	15.3%
	DON'T KNOW	27.6%
	NO RESPONSE	1.8%

30) Some smells or odors are peculiar to some religious groups.	TRUE	21.5%
	FALSE	31.9%
	SOMEWHAT TRUE	11.7%
	DON'T KNOW	33.1%
	NO RESPONSE	1.8%
31) Some smells or odors are peculiar to the handicapped.	TRUE	17.2%
	FALSE	33.1%
	SOMEWHAT TRUE	14.1%
	DON'T KNOW	31.9%
	NO RESPONSE	3.7%
32) Women are cleaner than men.	TRUE	11.7%
	FALSE	32.5%
	SOMEWHAT TRUE	45.4%
	DON'T KNOW	8.0%
	NO RESPONSE	2.5%
33) Men are cleaner than women.	TRUE	4.9%
	FALSE	33.7%
	SOMEWHAT TRUE	50.9%
	DON'T KNOW	8.0%
	NO RESPONSE	2.5%
34) Cleanliness is not related to gender.	TRUE	43.6%
	FALSE	30.1%
	SOMEWHAT TRUE	4.3%
	DON'T KNOW	17.2%
	NO RESPONSE	4.9%
35) Blacks are cleaner than Whites.	TRUE	11.4%
	FALSE	31.9%
	SOMEWHAT TRUE	43.6%
	DON'T KNOW	8.6%
	NO RESPONSE	4.3%

36)	Whites are cleaner than Blacks.	TRUE	3.1%
		FALSE	40.5%
		SOMEWHAT TRUE	42.9%
		DON'T KNOW	10.4%
		NO RESPONSE	3.1%
37)	Cleanliness is not related to race.	TRUE	61.3%
		FALSE	17.2%
		SOMEWHERE	6.1%
		DON'T KNOW	10.4%
		NO RESPONSE	4.9%
38)	Handicapped people are cleaner than non-handicapped people.	TRUE	1.2%
		FALSE	46.0%
		SOMEWHAT TRUE	27.6%
		DON'T KNOW	20.9%
		NO RESPONSE	4.3%
39)	Non-handicapped people are cleaner than handicapped people.	TRUE	7.4%
		FALSE	41.7%
		SOMEWHAT TRUE	28.9%
		DON'T KNOW	19.6%
		NO RESPONSE	2.5%
40)	Cleanliness is not related to handicap.	TRUE	60.7%
		FALSE	19.0%
		SOMEWHAT TRUE	1.8%
		DON'T KNOW	15.3%
		NO RESPONSE	3.1%
41)	I avoid females.	TRUE	1.8%
		FALSE	69.3%
		SOMEWHAT TRUE	24.5%
		DON'T KNOW	1.2%
		NO RESPONSE	3.1%

42) I avoid males.	TRUE	4.3%
	FALSE	62.6%
	SOMEWHAT TRUE	28.8%
	DON'T KNOW	.6%
	NO RESPONSE	3.7%
43) I avoid handicapped people.	TRUE	3.1%
	FALSE	75.5%
	SOMEWHAT TRUE	16.6%
	DON'T KNOW	.6%
	NO RESPONSE	4.3%
44) I avoid people who are religiously different from me.	TRUE	1.2%
	FALSE	81.0%
	SOMEWHAT TRUE	13.5%
	DON'T KNOW	1.2%
	NO RESPONSE	3.1%
45) I avoid people who are racially different from me.	TRUE	3.1%
	FALSE	84.7%
	SOMEWHAT TRUE	8.6%
	DON'T KNOW	.6%
	NO RESPONSE	3.1%
46) I avoid people younger than the age of 10.	TRUE	3.7%
	FALSE	82.2%
	SOMEWHAT TRUE	11.7%
	DON'T KNOW	.6%
	NO RESPONSE	2.5%
47) I avoid people over the age of 30.	TRUE	3.7%
	FALSE	79.8%
	SOMEWHAT	12.3%
	DON'T KNOW	1.8%
	NO RESPONSE	2.5%

48)	I prefer a multi-racial environment.	TRUE	62.0%
		FALSE	11.0%
		SOMEWHAT TRUE	17.2%
		DON'T KNOW	7.4%
		NO RESPONSE	2.5%
49)	I prefer a multi-religious environment.	TRUE	46.0%
		FALSE	19.6%
		SOMEWHAT TRUE	20.2%
		DON'T KNOW	11.7%
		NO RESPONSE	2.5%
50)	I prefer to interact with the handicapped.	TRUE	30.1%
		FALSE	14.1%
		SOMEWHAT TRUE	41.7%
		DON'T KNOW	11.0%
		NO RESPONSE	3.1%

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